

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown

Bible Study Notes

4-28-21

Leviticus 15

Bodily Discharges from Men - Verses 1-3

¹ The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ² "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'When any man has an unusual bodily discharge, such a discharge is unclean. ³ Whether it continues flowing from his body or is blocked, it will make him unclean. This is how his discharge will bring about uncleanness:

15:1-3 The literary structure of this chapter balances two types of discharge, chronic and intermittent, dealing with both sexes, making four specific cases. Verses 2-15 relate to a chronic discharge in the male, a "running issue out of his flesh". The verb means "to flow"...the exact nature of the disease is not known. Some suggestions have been a sexually transmitted disease such as gonorrhea. The striking thing about the uncleanness associated with these discharges is that not only the affected person became unclean, but also people and objects that came in contact with him, and these in their turn could become secondary sources of uncleanness. Thus, it was much more "infectious" than the uncleanness of skin diseases dealt with (in chapters 13 and 14), or unclean animals (in chapter 11).

The spread of the uncleanness of an abnormal bodily discharge - Verses 4-12

⁴ "Any bed the man with a discharge lies on will be unclean, and anything he sits on will be unclean. ⁵ Anyone who touches his bed must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. ⁶ Whoever sits on anything that the man with a discharge sat on must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. ⁷ "Whoever touches the man who has a discharge must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. ⁸ "If the man with the discharge spits on anyone who is clean, they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. ⁹ "Everything the man sits on when riding will be unclean, ¹⁰ and whoever touches any of the things that were under him will be unclean till evening; whoever picks up those things must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. ¹¹ "Anyone the man with a discharge touches without rinsing his hands with water must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. ¹² "A clay pot that the man touches must be broken, and any wooden article is to be rinsed with water.

15:4-12 Every bed is unclean on which he who has the discharge lies: Essentially, the uncleanness associated with an abnormal genital discharge from a man was spread through contact. Therefore, it could be transmitted to a **bed**, to a **place on which he sits**, and by direct touch (**he who touches**).

Whoever touches his bed: In this context, there were three ways a person or thing might be made unclean. The first level was the uncleanness of the man afflicted with the abnormal genital

discharge (15:1-3). The second level was an object or person who came into contact with the afflicted one. The third level was someone who came in contact with an object made unclean.

15:4-12 If he who has the discharge spits on him who is clean: The uncleanness could also be spread through saliva. The general principle was that when the unclean comes into contact with the clean, it is the clean that is made unclean. This general principle was completely reversed in the person and work of Jesus the Messiah. When Jesus - who was "clean" in every sense - touched an unclean person, He made them clean (Luke 5:12-14). They didn't make Him unclean.

Whoever touches his bed shall wash his clothes and bathe in water: People and things made unclean on the second or third level could be purified by a ceremonial washing of the object and the person involved. Then their uncleanness ended when the day ended (**until evening**).

The offering regarding an abnormal bodily discharge - Verses 13-15

¹³ **"When a man is cleansed from his discharge, he is to count off seven days for his ceremonial cleansing; he must wash his clothes and bathe himself with fresh water, and he will be clean. ¹⁴ On the eighth day he must take two doves or two young pigeons and come before the LORD to the entrance to the tent of meeting and give them to the priest. ¹⁵ The priest is to sacrifice them, the one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. In this way he will make atonement before the LORD for the man because of his discharge.**

15:13-15 When he who has a discharge is cleansed: When the abnormal genital discharge ended, the man could be made ceremonially clean. After a period of seven days (presumably without the discharge), there was a ceremonial cleansing. **He shall take for himself two turtledoves or two young pigeons:** A small offering was brought to the priest at the tabernacle. They were offered as a **sin offering** and as a **burnt offering**.

Regarding a normal bodily discharge from a man - Verses 16-18

¹⁶ **"When a man has an emission of semen, he must bathe his whole body with water, and he will be unclean till evening. ¹⁷ Any clothing or leather that has semen on it must be washed with water, and it will be unclean till evening. ¹⁸ When a man has sexual relations with a woman and there is an emission of semen, both of them must bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening.**

15:18 The verses in this section are not implying that sex is dirty or disgusting. God created sex for (1) the enjoyment of married couples, (2) the continuation of the race, and (3) the preservation of the covenant. Everything must be seen and done with a view toward God's love and ultimate authority. Sex is not separate from spirituality and God's care. God is concerned about our sexual habits. He designed us, including our sexuality, as wonderfully complex and unified creations. We tend to separate our physical and spiritual lives, but there is an inseparable intertwining. God must be Lord over our whole selves—including our private lives. In what ways do you acknowledge your relationship with God in your sexuality?

Impurity during menstruation - Verses 19-24

¹⁹ "When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening. ²⁰ "Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean, and anything she sits on will be unclean. ²¹ Anyone who touches her bed will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. ²² Anyone who touches anything she sits on will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening. ²³ Whether it is the bed or anything she was sitting on, when anyone touches it, they will be unclean till evening. ²⁴ "If a man has sexual relations with her and her monthly flow touches him, he will be unclean for seven days; any bed he lies on will be unclean.

15:19-24 If a woman has a discharge: In the case of a bloody discharge from a woman (her normal menstruation), her ceremonial impurity could be spread through direct contact or through an object that she lay or sat upon. **She shall be set apart seven days:** The woman's ceremonial impurity lasted seven days. There is no specific washing commanded at the end of the **seven days**, but it was either implied or considered unnecessary. **If any man lies with her:** A man who had sex with a woman during her days of normal menstruation was also **unclean seven days**, following the course of the woman's uncleanness. The man made unclean could spread his uncleanness through contact (**every bed on which he lies shall be unclean**).

The avoidance of intercourse during menstruation was later mentioned in Ezekiel 18:6 as an evidence of a righteous man. Yet a principle behind this command is universal, for every Christian and even every person: *God commands sexual restraint*. The command forced the obedient Israeli man or woman to say "no" to their sexual desires in certain situations. This does not mean that God regards sex itself as inherently sinful or impure; but it does mean that the sexual ethic of "if it feels good, do it" is an ungodly and destructive approach.

Unusual or abnormal bodily discharge - 25-30

²⁵ "When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period or has a discharge that continues beyond her period, she will be unclean as long as she has the discharge, just as in the days of her period. ²⁶ Any bed she lies on while her discharge continues will be unclean, as is her bed during her monthly period, and anything she sits on will be unclean, as during her period. ²⁷ Anyone who touches them will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening.

15:25-30 If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days: In the case of blood discharge **other than** normal menstruation (either longer in duration or out of her normal menstrual cycle), a woman was also ceremonially **unclean**. **Whatever she sits on shall be unclean:** The woman's ceremonial uncleanness could be spread to any object upon which she lay or sat. That uncleanness would be spread to any person touching those objects made unclean.

The offering made upon the cleansing of a woman with an genital discharge - Verses 28-30

²⁸ "When she is cleansed from her discharge, she must count off seven days, and after that she will be ceremonially clean. ²⁹ On the eighth day she must take two doves or two young pigeons and bring them to the priest at the entrance to the tent of meeting. ³⁰ The priest is to sacrifice one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. In this way he will make atonement for her before the LORD for the uncleanness of her discharge.

15:25-30 If she is cleansed: When the abnormal discharge ended, there was an additional seven days of ceremonial impurity. This was the same procedure followed after the cleansing of a man with an abnormal genital discharge (verses 13-15). **She shall take for herself two turtledoves or two young pigeons:** A small offering was brought to the priest at the tabernacle. They were offered as a sin offering and as a burnt offering.

"The reason offerings had to be made for these discharges and not for the discharges of semen and menstruation was because they were considered abnormal."

Summation of the laws of bodily discharge - Verses 31-33

³¹ "You must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, so they will not die in their uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them." ³² These are the regulations for a man with a discharge, for anyone made unclean by an emission of semen, ³³ for a woman in her monthly period, for a man or a woman with a discharge, and for a man who has sexual relations with a woman who is ceremonially unclean.

15:32-33 God is concerned about health. He upholds the dignity of the person, the dignity of the body, and the dignity of the sexual experience. His commands call the people to avoid unhealthy practices and promote healthy ones with practical instructions. Washing was a God-directed means to maintain physical health; acts of purification or cleansing were God-directed means to preserve spiritual dignity. Millennia before the rise of the AIDS epidemic, God's directions already preserved people from known and unknown dangers. This shows God's high regard for sex and sexuality. In our day, sex has been degraded by shocking media exposure. It has become public domain, not private celebration. We are called to have a high regard for sex, both in good health and in purity. Our deepest form of gratitude to God for the gift of sex is expressed in how we use the gift.